

# PRESS RELEASE

## Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

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### **Conyers Criticizes FCC for Disregarding Will of Congress and Approving Nation's Largest Merger of Spanish-Language Media Companies**

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Congressman John Conyers, Jr., issued the following statement today regarding the FCC's decision to approve the merger of Univision Communications Inc. ("Univision") and Hispanic Broadcasting Company ("HBC"):

"It's outrageous and disgraceful that the FCC approved this merger. While the merger is a victory for large media conglomerates, right-wing media outlets, and the Bush Administration, it's a sure loss for Hispanics now that 70% of all Spanish-language media in this country will be controlled by a single non-Hispanic company. If it were English language media, this merger would never be approved under either set of rules or any theory of public interest. I'm amazed the FCC would even attempt to justify this disparate treatment.

The FCC's distorted rationale for such unequal treatment of Hispanics is based on the claim that most Hispanics can speak some English and thus are not sealed off from English media. This completely ignores the fact that the majority of the nearly 40 million Hispanic Americans rely significantly on Spanish-language broadcast media for their news and information; forty percent—nearly 16 million—rely predominantly on Spanish-language broadcast media, and 25%—nearly 10 million—rely exclusively on it. As Commissioners Adelstein and Copps so eloquently stated in their dissenting opinion, Chairman Powell and the majority of the FCC are telling the Spanish-speaking population in this country to learn English if they want the same choices others have—that English-language broadcasting offers adequate choice for everyone, even those who don't speak any English or know very little English.

My disbelief is compounded by the fact that Congress has spoken against mergers of this kind. In fact, earlier this month Congressman Menendez and I introduced legislation, H.R. 3027, to prevent media mergers that would create monopolies in Spanish-language TV and radio broadcasting. Our bill, as well as companion legislation introduced in the Senate by Senators Kennedy and Clinton, is called the National Minority Media Opportunities Act. The Act ensures that Americans who are members of any "language minority" group under the Voting Rights Act (defined as American Indian, Asian Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Hispanic Americans) are not injured by excessive media concentration of companies that broadcast primarily in their native languages.

The full House and the Senate Appropriations Committee have both voted for spending bills that would prevent the FCC from implementing the June 2, 2003 rules. And earlier this month the Third Circuit imposed a stay on the FCC's implementation of the rules.

Given the clear opinions of Congress, the courts, and the public, it's high time the FCC stop catering to the only groups left with a stake in this fight—the large media conglomerates and the Bush Administration—and start acting consistent with its mandate to promote the public interest."

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